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Wednesday, July 26, 2006 Editorial dept.: 313-222-6583, letters@freepress.com

IN OUR OPINION

How to Shame Fined Candidates

Macomb County is setting a good example for other local governments by providing the public with vital information and, if necessary, shaming public officials into doing the right thing.

County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh is posting on the county's Web site the names of office-seekers who haven't paid fines for late reports on campaign contributions. Nearly 50 candidates owe \$20 to \$3,000 for delinquent reports that show how much office-seekers raised and who contributed.

Macomb's clerk became Michigan's first to post such a list on the Internet — incredibly, Wayne County doesn't even keep a list of people who owe fines — but others should follow. The new Internet reporting service cost Macomb County only \$450 to set up. It's an inexpensive yet effective way to deal with delinquent candidates, who often ignore mailed notices.

Sabaugh's office has collected

more than \$2,000 in fines since sending out letters this month about the new public listing. Candidates can even pay up online. Sabaugh has become a state leader in enabling the public to transact business and access court and vital records through the Internet. Such efforts save the county money — and the public time and trouble.

Only a small share of candidates and officeholders don't follow the rules, but the public ought to know who they are. An inability to comply with simple campaign finance laws does not reflect well on any candidate. Voters should know who's contributing to public office-seekers, and how much they're getting. For those who need a little public shaming to help them do the right thing, an Internet listing is one of the easiest ways to do it.

In the interests of good government and the public's right-to-know, other local governments — and the state — should follow Macomb's lead.